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## THE DEATH-ROLL OF MONT BLANC.

In these days, when it is the fashion to decry Mont Blanc, in company with a good many other old institutions, there is one thing about the mountain which is apt to be lost sight of, and that is how very fatal it has been to mountaineers. It is quite possible that the proportion of killed to those who succeed in the ascent—and the same will hold good in respect of any other Alpine peak—would not be found to be great, for probably more people have gone up Mont Blanc than any other high mountain; but no number of successful ascents will minimise the fact that there can be very real danger on Mont Blanc. The causes of danger are not far to seek. The mountain is regarded, and in fact is, comparatively easy of ascent; and from the days when Albert Smith did so much to dispel the awe with which it was once the fashion to regard it, the popularity of the expedition has grown year by year, till quite a considerable percentage of those who now go to Chamouni consider but the half of their visit accomplished if they fail to 'do' Mont Blanc. Thus it comes to pass that a great number of individuals are allowed to ascend who ought not to go on the mountain at all, and who, under certain conditions, may easily become a source of danger to themselves and to those who accompany them.

But the danger from this cause is as nothing compared with that which exists in the inferior quality of many of the guides. At Chamouni, every one who styles himself a guide must belong to a kind of trades-union society called the 'Compagnie des Guides,' and presided over by a 'Guide-chef.' All who enter the 'Compagnie des Guides,' good, bad, and indifferent, enter it on the same footing, and are compelled to take their turn for an engagement on a register kept at the office of the 'Guide-chef' for the purpose. Thus, a traveller who wishes to engage a guide, is not allowed—except under very special circumstances—to choose his man, but must take him whose name stands first on the list; and it may so

happen that quite an incompetent individual is given charge of a party wishing to ascend Mont Blanc, while a really good guide is told off to carry a knapsack over the Col de Balme.

It is easy to imagine what may result from a system such as this. For one thing, it has had the effect of utterly demoralising Chamouni guides as a body; and it has been the means, as we shall see presently, of some of the worst accidents that have ever happened in the Alps. It is usual nowadays for members of Alpine Clubs to bring to Chamouni their own guides from other districts, rather than trust to the local men; and so it has come about that Chamouni guides have been reduced to taking casual parties up Mont Blanc, with the result, that very few of them are of any use out of their own particular district, and as regards the more difficult peaks of the range, very little even in it. In fact, it is hardly an exaggeration to say that the really good Chamouni men may now be counted on the fingers. The grave scandal occasioned by the desertion of the Russian, Professor Fedchenko, by his guides—two inexperienced boys—and his subsequent death on the Mer de Glace, called forth a severe protest against the Chamouni guide system on the part of the Alpine Club; but beyond some slight modification of the rules as regards the choosing of special men, very little has been done; and to this day the Rules and Regulations of the 'Compagnie des Guides' of Chamouni remain a byword with all mountaineers.

Finally, there is the danger—and this perhaps greatest of all—from weather. Easy though Mont Blanc may be as long as the weather is good, there is not a mountain in all the Alps which can become so dangerous in a storm. Every one who has had experience of climbing, knows how weather can affect a mountain, and how an ascent which is easy enough one day, may become dangerous if not impossible the next. It is quite a mistake to suppose that because a mountain offers no *physical* difficulties, that there is no risk attending the ascent. We have Mont

Blanc as a case in point. Easiest of all the Great mountains, he has proved himself the most fatal of any.

The first accident within our knowledge which occurred on Mont Blanc was that to Dr Hamel's party in 1820, and being the first accident to Alpine climbers, it created at the time an immense sensation. From accounts published by the survivors, it seems clear that the accident was caused by ignorance of the state of the snow—ignorance excusable enough in those days, when as a matter of fact the art of climbing was very little understood. On August 18, 1820, a Russian professor, Dr Hamel; two Oxonians, Messrs Durnford and Henderson; a Genevieve named Sellique; and twelve guides, left Chamouni, and in twelve hours—about double the time now taken—reached the rocks of the Grands Mulets. Here they pitched a tent which they had brought with them, and passed the night. Bad weather came on after sunset; and as it did not clear next morning in time for them to start, they had to pass another night in the tent. It came on to rain again in the evening; but the following morning, August 20, was fine, and it was determined to make a push for the summit. At this juncture, M. Sellique was overcome with 'scruples' on the subject of making the ascent, and declined to accompany the others, so he was left behind in charge of two of the guides. The rest of the party set out at five A.M. The weather kept fine; but the snow—to quote one of the survivors—was found to be 'rather too soft.' They would appear to have followed the line of ascent usually adopted in these days, until opposite the Dome du Gouté, and on a level with it, when they branched off sharply to the left, and commenced to traverse a steep snow-slope, directing their course straight for the Mont Maudit. They were not roped, and were apparently proceeding in Indian file, when suddenly the snow gave beneath their feet, and carried them away bodily down the slope. They were all carried a great distance—some accounts say twelve hundred feet—and then the whole avalanche buried itself in a great crevasse. The three leading guides were completely overwhelmed; but the rest of the party stopped short of the crevasse, and were saved. The survivors made frantic efforts to rescue their unfortunate companions; but the poor fellows must have been buried under many tons of snow, and these efforts were unavailing.

It was scarcely thought probable that trace of them would ever again be found; but after the lapse of nearly half a century, the glacier yielded up its dead. In 1863, or forty-three years after the catastrophe, portions of human bodies, the débris of a lantern and Alpenstock, and the leaves of a Latin book, were found imbedded in the ice on the surface of the Glacier des Bossons and near its foot. They were recognised as belonging to the lost guides of Dr Hamel's party. Further discoveries were made in the two following years; and of the relics thus brought to light, some are preserved to this day by the Alpine Club in their rooms at St Martin's Place.

This accident afforded strong evidence in

favour of the fact of glacier motion, for the remains were found to have been carried by the ice a distance of nearly five miles from the spot where the catastrophe occurred.

Almost simultaneously with the finding of the relics of Dr Hamel's ill-fated expedition, occurred another accident on Mont Blanc. On August 9, 1864, a young porter named Ambroise Couttet, while accompanying two Austrian gentlemen in the ascent of Mont Blanc, fell into a crevasse on the Grand Plateau. This was an accident attributable entirely to carelessness, for it appears that at the moment of the catastrophe Couttet was walking apart from the others and quite unattached. His companions did their best to effect a rescue; but the crevasse was of such great depth that they could not come near him. A party of guides subsequently went out with the object of recovering the body; but although two of their number descended ninety feet into the crevasse, they failed to reach it. It is almost certain, from the terrible nature of the fall, that the unfortunate man's death must have been instantaneous.

There were two sad accidents on Mont Blanc in 1866. The precise cause of the first is somewhat obscure, but the facts as far as they are known are these. Sir George Young and his two brothers, unaccompanied by guides, set out to ascend Mont Blanc on August 23, and succeeded in reaching the summit in safety. They had not proceeded far in the descent, when, for some reason unexplained, one of the party slipped and dragged down the other two. They slid for a short distance, then fell a height of twenty feet or so, and were finally stopped by soft snow. Sir George and his second brother escaped serious injury; but the youngest brother, Mr Bulkeley Young, was found to have broken his neck.

The accident to Captain Arkwright's party was of a different description, and in many respects bears a close resemblance to that in which Dr Hamel's guides lost their lives. On the 13th of October—unusually late in the year for such an expedition—Captain Arkwright with one guide, Michel Simond, and two porters, started from the Grands Mulets to ascend Mont Blanc. At a little distance they were followed by the landlord of the *Pierre Pointue*, Silvain Couttet, and a porter—these two having apparently come for their own pleasure—on a separate rope. The guides, probably by reason of its being a shorter route, and, as such, likely to save time—an important matter at that season of the year—chose the route adopted by Dr Hamel's party, and which had come to be known by the name of the *Ancien Passage*. They had almost reached the spot where the disaster of 1820 occurred, when the roar of an avalanche was heard. Couttet and his companion, realising the danger, fled for their lives. They were a little way behind the others, and were so fortunate as to escape; but Captain Arkwright and his guides were caught by the avalanche and swept away. This accident arose from precisely the same cause as that which happened to Dr Hamel's party—ignorance of the state of the snow; but it differed in one respect: whereas Dr Hamel's party started the avalanche, the avalanche which proved fatal to Captain Arkwright and his guides fell from above.

The fact of a second accident occurring at the same place and from a similar cause, has given to the *Ancien Passage* the reputation of being essentially unsafe. It is not necessarily more dangerous than other routes, and indeed it may even be the safest route from Chamouni up Mont Blanc. It is only really dangerous when the snow is in bad order; and this is a point upon which a guide is—or should be—competent to give an opinion. On the day of the accident, the snow was not in proper condition, and it was because a right discretion was not used, that Captain Arkwright and his companions lost their lives.

We now come to an accident which ranks as by far the most terrible which has ever happened to Alpine climbers, for it resulted in the loss of no fewer than eleven lives. On September 5, 1870, a party consisting of two American gentlemen, Messrs Beane and Randall, and a Mr MacCorkendale, with eight guides and porters—with one exception, all Chamouni men—left Chamouni with the intention of ascending Mont Blanc. They passed the night at the *Grands Mulets*, and next morning started for the summit. Early in the afternoon, a violent storm burst over Mont Blanc; and as the weather became very bad and they did not return, it was resolved to send out a search-party from Chamouni. The weather, however, continued for some days of such an unfavourable character that it was not until the 17th, and when all hope had been abandoned of finding any of the lost party alive, that a discovery was made. The dead bodies of Mr MacCorkendale and two of the porters were first found. They were lying on the snow quite uninjured, head uppermost, a little way above the *Mur de la Côte*; and from the torn condition of their clothes, it seemed probable that they had slid some distance to the spot where they were discovered. Higher up, lay the bodies of Mr Beane and another porter, with the greater portion of the baggage beside them. Of the remaining six, no trace could be seen. A few small articles which must have belonged to them were picked up subsequently in the direction of the *Brenva Glacier*; but that was all. To this day their fate remains a mystery.

The only light thrown upon the catastrophe was that which could be gathered from the pages of a diary found on Mr Beane, and written by him. Some doubt at first was cast upon the authenticity of the entry, but there seems no reason at all for disbelieving its genuineness. What it told was as follows: *Tuesday, September 6.*—I have made the ascent of Mont Blanc with ten persons—eight guides, Mr Corkendale, and Mr Randall. We arrived at the summit at half-past two o'clock. Immediately after leaving it, I was enveloped in clouds of snow. We passed the night in a grotto excavated out of the snow, affording very uncomfortable shelter, and I was ill all night. *September 7 (morning).*—Intense cold, much snow, which falls uninterruptedly, guides restless. *September 7 (evening).*—We have been on Mont Blanc for two days in a terrible snowstorm; we have lost our way, and are in a hole scooped out of the snow, at a height of fifteen thousand feet. I have no hope of descending. Perhaps this book may be found and forwarded. . . . We have no food; my feet

are already frozen, and I am exhausted; I have only strength to write a few words. I die in the faith of Jesus Christ, with affectionate thoughts of my family; my remembrances to all. I trust we may meet in heaven.'

The diary ended with instructions to his family as to his private affairs.

It is to be regretted that poor Mr Beane gives us so little information of any practical value; but meagre as his diary is, it sheds light on one or two points. First, we gather that the party actually reached the summit; and next, that it was about half-past two in the afternoon, and immediately after leaving it, that the storm caught them. Now, how was it, we may fairly ask, that so little progress was made on the downward path?—for the ice-grotto of which Mr Beane speaks was constructed at an altitude of fifteen thousand feet, or only seven hundred and eighty-one feet below the summit. How was it that the guides failed completely to find a way back over ground which they had traversed so recently? Mr Beane does not tell us if any attempts were made on the 6th and 7th to find the way down—what little evidence we have tends to prove that there were none—he merely says, 'We have lost our way.' To sit down and wait where they were, as they appear to have done, showed a want of judgment which, without being better acquainted than we are with the facts of the case, seems quite inexplicable. Nothing is more common in the high Alps than to be overtaken by bad weather; but out of the Chamouni district there has not been an instance of a whole party perishing from this special cause. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the guides were not equal to their task, that they lost their heads at the very approach of danger, and gave themselves up for lost at the moment when they should have made the most determined effort to escape.

There was another circumstance, too, which was held at the time to reflect somewhat upon the conduct of the guides—not one of their bodies was found. The five bodies recovered were those of the *heaviest* members of the party, and there can be little doubt that they must have been left behind, while the rest made an effort to save themselves. Mr Beane, however, makes no mention of any division of the party, and it is charitable to suppose that no division actually took place until after the weaker members had succumbed to the exposure. What led to the division, will never be known; neither will it be known what motive impelled the guides to act in such an utterly incomprehensible manner. That the leaders of the party *ought* to have been thoroughly up to their work, is emphasised by the fact, that neither Mr Beane, Mr Randall, nor Mr MacCorkendale had had previous experience of mountaineering, and were quite incapable of giving advice of any practical value when difficulties arose. As a matter of fact, it does not appear that any one of the guides held a foremost place in his profession. Judging by their actions, they certainly proved themselves singularly wanting in many of the most important qualities of good guides; and it is impossible to believe that they could have been other than very second-rate. But should the blame of the disaster be laid to their charge? Should it not

rather attach to a system which rendered such an accident only too probable?

In the same year (1870) there was yet another accident on Mont Blanc. A gentleman and two ladies, accompanied by a guide and a porter, were out on the mountain; and the gentleman wishing to go further than the ladies cared to, took the guide, and left them in charge of the porter. With what object, it is not known, the porter promptly proceeded to conduct his charges across a snow-field which was well known to be honeycombed with concealed crevasses. Under these circumstances, it would have been only wonderful if an accident had not occurred, and unfortunately that took place which might have been predicted. The porter had given his arm to one of the ladies, and was leading her across, when the snow gave way beneath them, and they both fell headlong into a deep crevasse. Here was a case of two lives wantonly sacrificed. That any one calling himself a guide should have shown such gross ignorance of the very first principles of mountaineering as this porter did, is almost inconceivable. It is perfectly clear that he did not understand his business, and was certainly not a fit person to have been sent on expeditions above the snow-line.

A still later accident on Mont Blanc took place on the south side. On the 30th August 1874, Mr J. A. G. Marshall, with two Oberland guides, Johann Fischer and Ulrich Almer, left Courmayeur with a view to attempting the ascent of Mont Blanc by way of the Brouillard Glacier, an ascent which had not at that time been effected. They camped out upon the mountain at a height of about ten thousand feet, and the following day worked their way a considerable distance upwards till they found themselves finally stopped by an impassable wall of rock. This occurred somewhat late in the afternoon, too late, indeed, to attempt any other route, and accordingly they turned back. The descent was difficult, and night overtook them before they reached the spot where they had bivouacked the previous evening. They were crossing the last bit of glacier, when Fischer inquired the time, and Mr Marshall drew out his watch, while the others came up to him with a light. As they stood thus close together, the snow gave way beneath them. Fischer fell first into a crevasse which at this point was some thirty feet deep and five feet in width; and Mr Marshall was dragged on to him; while Almer alighted upon a hummock of snow but a few feet below the mouth of the crevasse. Mr Marshall's head came in contact with the side of the crevasse, and in his case, death must have been instantaneous; while Fischer's injuries were of such a character that he, too, could not have lived for any time after the fall. Almer escaped with a severe shaking, but was rendered insensible by the shock of the fall. Upon coming to himself, he found that both his companions were beyond help; and as soon as there was sufficient light, he struggled down to Courmayeur with the intelligence of the accident. The dead bodies were recovered the same evening, and brought back the next day to Courmayeur.

Of all the accidents which have happened on Mont Blanc, this was perhaps the one most deserving the term. Mr Marshall and his guides

were first-rate mountaineers, and it was scarcely from any fault of their own that the catastrophe occurred. From a sketch of the spot taken by M. Loppé the artist a few days after the occurrence, the crevasse looks curiously narrow, and if the party had only been standing but a few paces to right or left, they would have been in perfect safety. Moreover, the scene of the catastrophe was not five minutes' walk from the moraine.

Thus Mont Blanc is responsible for the loss of no fewer than twenty-four lives; but it is when we compare him with other mountains that we realise how much more fatal he has been than any of his fellows. The following table, compiled from the *Alpine Journal*, will best bring home this fact:

	Accidents.	Lives lost.
Mont Blanc.....	7	24
Matterhorn.....	3	6
Lyskamm.....	2	6
Monte Rosa.....	2	4
Monte Cevedale.....	1	4
Dent Blanche.....	1	3
Haut de Cri.....	1	2
Titlis.....	1	2
Jungfrau.....	1	2
Wetterhorn.....	1	2
Aiguille Blanche.....	1	2

Single lives have been lost upon each of the following mountains: Riffelhorn, Gross Venediger, Schreckhorn, Piz Tschierva, Diablerets, Blumlis Alp, Piz Bernina, Grandes Jorasses, Meije.

Of accidents which may fairly come under the head of Alpine accidents, such as accidents upon glaciers and subsidiary peaks, there appear to have been thirty-five—making a total loss since 1859, when climbing became a recognised form of amusement, of ninety-eight lives, or, inclusive of Dr Hamel's accident, one hundred and one. When we come to consider that Mont Blanc is responsible for nearly one-fourth of the whole, we may well question whether the depreciation of the mountain is quite justified. Is it not rather a case of underrating the enemy?

No reasonable person can deny that there is at times danger on Mont Blanc, and when we consider from what a variety of causes it may arise—from weather, from the state of the snow, from the unfitness of many of those who attempt the ascent, and last, but not least, from the guide system of Chamouni—we feel inclined to wonder not, indeed, that the loss of life has been great, but rather that the death-roll is not much greater.

#### IN ALL SHADES.

##### CHAPTER XL

EVEN as Delgado stood there still on the steps of the piazza at Orange Grove, waving his blood-stained cutlass fiercely about his head, and setting his foot contemptuously on Mr Dupuy's prostrate and bleeding body, Harry Noel tore up the path that led from Dick Castello's house at Savannah Garden, and halted suddenly in blank amazement in front of the doorway—Harry Noel, in evening dress, hatless and spurless; just as he had risen in horror from his dinner, and riding his new mare without even a saddle, in his hot haste to see the cause of

the unexpected tumult at the Dupuys' estate. The fierce red glare of the burning cane-houses had roused him unawares at Savannah Garden in the midst of his coffee ; and the cries of the negroes and the sound of pistol-shots had cast him into a frantic fever of anxiety for Nora's safety. 'The niggers have risen, by Jove !' Dick Castello cried aloud, as the flames rose higher and higher above the blazing cane-houses. 'They must be attacking old Dupuy ; and if once their blood's up, you may depend upon it, Noel, they won't leave him until they've fairly murdered him.'

Harry Noel didn't wait a moment to hear any further conjectures of his host's on the subject, but darting round to the stables bareheaded, clapped a bit forthwith into his mare's mouth, jumped on her back just as she stood, in a perfect frenzy of fear and excitement, and tore along the narrow winding road that led by tortuous stretches to Orange Grove as fast as his frightened horse's legs could possibly carry him.

As he leaped eagerly from his mount to the ground in the midst of all that hideous din and uproar and mingled confusion, Delgado was just calling on his fellow-blacks to follow him boldly into the house and to 'kill de missy ;' and the Orange Grove negroes, cowed and terrified now that their master had fallen bodily before them, were beginning to drop back, trembling, into the rooms behind, and allow the frantic and triumphant rioters to have their own way unmolested. In a moment, Harry took in the full terror of the scene—saw Mr Dupuy's body lying, a mass of hacked and bleeding wounds, upon the wooden floor of the front piazza ; saw the infuriated negroes pressing on eagerly with their cutlasses lifted aloft, now fairly drunk with the first taste of buckra blood ; and Delgado in front of them all, leaping wildly, and gesticulating in frantic rage with arms and hands and fingers, as he drove back the terrified servants through the heavy old mahogany doorway of the great drawing-room into the room that opened out behind toward Nora's own little sacred boudoir.

Harry had no weapon of any sort with him except the frail riding-whip he carried in his hand ; but without waiting for a second, without thinking for one instant of the surrounding danger, he rushed up the piazza steps, pushed the astonished rioters to right and left with his powerful arms, jumped over the senseless planter's prostrate body, swept past Delgado into the narrow doorway, and there stood confronting the savage ringleader boldly, his little riding-whip raised high above his proud head with a fierce and threatening angry gesture. 'Stop there !' he cried, in a voice of stern command, that even in that supreme moment of passion and triumph had its full effect upon the enraged negroes. 'Stop there, you mean-spirited villains and murderers ! Not a step further—not a step further, I tell you ! Cowards, cowards, every one of you, to kill a poor old man like that upon his own staircase, and to threaten a helpless innocent lady !'

As he spoke, he laid his hand heavily upon Louis Delgado's bony shoulder, and pushed the

old negro steadily backward, out of the doorway and through the piazza, to the front steps, where Mr Dupuy's body was still lying unattended and bleeding profusely. 'Stand back, Delgado !' he cried out fiercely and authoritatively. 'Stand back this minute, and put down your cutlass ! If you want to fight the whites, you cowardly scoundrels you, why don't you fight the men like yourselves, openly and straightforward, instead of coming by night, without note or warning, burning and hacking and killing and destroying, and waging war against defenceless old men and women and children ?'

The negroes fell back a little grudgingly, as he spoke, and answered him only by the loud and deep guttural cry—an inarticulate, horribly inhuman gurgle—which is their sole possible form of speech in the very paroxysm of African passion. Louis Delgado held his cutlass half doubtfully in his uplifted hand : he had tasted blood once now ; he had laid himself open to the fierce vengeance of the English law ; he was sorely tempted in the whirlwind of the moment to cut down Harry Noel too, as he had cut down the white-headed old planter the minute before. But the innate respect of the essentially fighting negro for a resolute opponent held him back deliberating for a moment ; and he drew down his cutlass as quickly as he had raised it, divided in mind whether to strike or to permit a parley.

Noel seized the occasion with intuitive strategy. 'Here you, my friends,' he cried boldly, turning round towards the cowering Orange Grove servants—'is this the way you defend your master ? Pick him up, some of you—pick him up this minute, I tell you, and lay him out decently on the sofa over yonder.—There, there ; don't be afraid. Not one of these confounded rogues and cowards dares to touch you or come one pace nearer you as long as you're doing it. If he does ! cutlass or no cutlass, I'll break this riding-whip to pieces, I tell you, across his black head as soon as look at him.' And he brandished the whip angrily in front of him, towards the mad and howling group of angry rioters, held at bay for the moment on the piazza steps by that solitary, undismayed, young Englishman with his one frail and ridiculous weapon.

The rioters howled all the louder at his words, and leaped and grinned and chattered and gesticulated like wild beasts behind an iron railing ; but not one of them ventured to be the first in aiming a blow with his deadly implement at Harry Noel. They only yelled once more incomprehensibly in their deep gutturals, and made hideous wild grimaces, and waved their cutlasses frantically around them with horrible inarticulate negro imprecations.

But Harry stood there firm and unyielding, facing the maddened crowd with his imperious manner, and overawing them in spite of themselves with that strange power of a superior race over the inferior in such critical moments of intense passion.

The Orange Grove servants, having fresh courage put into their failing breasts once more by the inspiring presence of a white man at their sides, and being true at heart to their poor master, as negro house-servants always are and

always have been in the worst extremities, took advantage of the momentary lull in the storm to do as Harry told them, and lift Mr Dupuy's body up from the ground, laying it carefully on the piazza sofa. 'That's better,' Harry said, as they finished their task.—'Now, we must go on and drive away these murderous rascals. If we don't drive them away, my good friends, they'll kill Miss Nora—they'll kill Miss Nora. Would you have it said of you that you let a parcel of murderous plantation rioters kill your own dead master's daughter right before your very faces?'

As he spoke, he saw a pale face, pale, not with fear, but with terrible anger, standing mutely and immovably beside him; and next moment he heard Nora Dupuy's voice crying out deeply, in the very echo of his own angry words: 'Cowards, cowards!'

At the sight of the hated Dupuy features, the frenzied plantation hands seemed to work themselves up into a fresh access of ungovernable fury. With indescribable writhings and mouthings and grimaces, their hatred and vengeance found articulate voice for a moment at least, and they cried aloud like one man: 'Kill her—kill her! Kill de missy! Kill her—kill her!'

'Give me a pistol,' Harry Noel exclaimed wildly to the friendly negroes close behind his back: 'a gun—a knife—cutlass—anything!'

'We got nuffin, sah,' Uncle Zekiel answered, blankly and whiningly, now helpless as a child before the sudden inundation of armed rioters, for without his master he could do nothing.

Harry looked around him desperately for a moment, then, advancing a step with hasty pre-meditation, he wrenched a cutlass suddenly by an unexpected snatch from one of the foremost batch of rioters, and stepped back with it once more unhurt, as if by miracle, into the narrow pass of the mahogany doorway.

'Stand away, Miss Dupuy!' he cried to her earnestly. 'If you value your life, stand back, I beg of you. This is no place for you to-night. Run, run! If you don't escape, there'll be more murder done presently.'

'I shall not go,' Nora answered, clenching her fist hard and knitting her brow sternly, 'as long as one of these abominable wretches dares to stop without permission upon my father's piazza.'

'Then stand away, you there!' Harry shouted aloud to the surging mob; 'stand away this moment, every one of you! Whoever steps one single step nearer this lady behind me, that step shall be his last.'

Delgado stood still and hesitated once more, with strange irresolution—he didn't like to hit the brown man—but Isaac Pourtalès, lifting his cutlass wildly above his head, took a step in front and brought it down with a fierce swish towards Harry's skull, in spite of kinship. Harry parried it dexterously with his own cutlass, like a man who has learned what fencing means; and then, rushing, mad with rage, at the astonished Isaac before he knew what to look for, brought down a heavy blow upon his right shoulder, that disabled his opponent forthwith, and made him drop at once his useless weapon idly by his side. 'Take that, you nigger dog!' Harry hissed out fiercely through his close-set teeth; 'and if any other confounded nigger

among you all dares to take a single step nearer in the same direction, he'll get as much and more, too, than this insolent fellow here has got for his trouble.'

The contemptuous phrase once more roused all the negroes' anger. 'Who you call nigger, den?' they cried out fiercely, leaping in a body like wild beasts upon him. 'Kill him—kill him! Him doan't fit to lib. Kill him—kill him, dis minute—kill him!'

But Delgado, some strange element of compassion for the remote blood of his own race still rising up instinctively and mysteriously within him, held back the two or three foremost among the pressing mass with his sinewy arm. 'No, no, me fren's,' he shouted angrily, 'doan't kill him, doan't kill him. Tiger no eat tiger, ole-time folk say; tiger no eat tiger. Him is nigger himself. Him is Isaac Pourtalès' own cousin.—Doan't kill him. His mudder doan't nobody, I tell you, me fren's, but coloured gal, de same as yours is—coloured gal from ole Barbadoes. I sayin' to you, me fren's, ole-time folk has true proverb, tiger no eat tiger.'

The sea of angry black faces swelled up and down wildly and dubiously for a moment, and then, with the sudden fitful changefulness of negro emotion, two or three voices, the women's especially, called aloud, with sobs and shrieks: 'Doan't kill him!—doan't kill him! Him me brudder—him me brudder. Doan't kill him! Hallelujah!'

Harry looked at them savagely, with knit brows and firm-set teeth, his cutlass poised ready to strike in one hand, and his whole attitude that of a forlorn-hope at bay against overwhelming and irresistible numbers.

'You black devils!' he cried out fiercely, flinging the words in their faces, as it were, with a concentrated power of insult and hatred. 'I won't owe my life to that shameful plea. Perhaps I may have a drop or two of your black blood flowing somewhere in my veins, and perhaps I mayn't; but whether I have or whether I haven't, I wouldn't for dear life itself acknowledge kindred with such a pack of cowardly vagabonds and murderers as you, who would hack an old man brutally to death like that, before his own daughter's face, upon his own staircase.'

'Mr Noel,' Nora echoed, in a clear defiant tone, nothing trembling, from close behind him, 'that was well said—that was bravely spoken! Let them come on and kill us if they will, the wretches. We're not afraid of them, we're not afraid of them.'

'Miss Dupuy,' Harry cried earnestly, looking back towards her with a face of eager entreaty, 'save yourself! for God's sake, save yourself. There's still time even now to escape—by the garden-gate—to Hawthorn's—while these wretches here are busy murdering me.'

At the word, Louis Delgado sprang forward once more, cutlass in hand, no longer undecided, and with one blow on the top of the head felled Harry Noel heavily to the ground.

Nora shrieked, and fell fainting to the ground.

'Him doan't dead yet,' Delgado yelled aloud in devilish exultation, lifting his cutlass again with savage persistence. 'Hack him to pieces, dar—hack him to pieces! Him doan't dead yet,

I tellin' you, me fren's. Hack him to pieces ! An' when him dead, we gwine to carry him an' de missy an' Massa Dupuy out behind dar, an' burn dem all in a pile togedder on de hot ashes ob de smokin' cane-house !

COUNTRY JOTTINGS.

THE British Islands were formerly covered with vast forests. Robber-bands at one time infested the woods, of whom Robin Hood of Sherwood Forest is the most noted. A continually increasing population and the advancement of science have changed the aspect ; these places have now become the abodes of peaceful, civilised, and friendly men ; the desert and impenetrable forest are changed into marts of industry, cultivated fields, rich gardens, and magnificent cities. The towns and cities of the Britons were generally built in valleys upon the margin of a stream or river, for the convenience of water and security from winds. Surrounded by impervious woods, and secured by a rampart and fosse, they were sufficiently strong to resist the ordinary attacks of their enemies. The Roman soldiers were as much accustomed to the use of the plough as the shield, and were as industrious in peace as they were brave in war. When they had fixed their camps, they availed themselves of the advantages the surrounding country presented, in order to secure to themselves the necessary supplies. Woods were cut down, the ground cleared and ploughed up ; and roads were constructed from station to station, to facilitate the conveyance of goods, and collect their forces together with more ease and expedition on any sudden emergency. The Roman custom of grazing in Italy was adopted in the remotest parts of their widely extended empire. The dry ground of the hills and the moist meadows of the vale were successively the pasture of their flocks and herds. During the summer, they confined them to the marshes and low grounds ; and on the approach of winter they drove them up to the hills. Our Anglo-Saxon forefathers in the forests of oak and beech reared large numbers of sheep and swine, and in the rich pastures and open downs of the south and west.

Uncivilised man, impelled rather by his wants than allured by pleasure, ardently pursues the beasts of the forest. Hunting may be considered as his necessary employment, and the game caught by his dexterity and cunning, as being the chief part of his subsistence. This employment, toilsome as it is, yields, however, but a precarious and uncertain support ; and when man has been taught to supply his wants by the cultivation of the ground, if it be not wholly relinquished, it will only be pursued as an amusement or as a healthful exercise. The ancient Britons lived on milk and the produce of the chase. In the present day, the Hottentot and Bushman partly live on the larvae of insects and the refuse of animals killed by the colonists. In Australia proper, some natives eat reptiles, and even insects and vermin. The Oceanic negroes have no fixed habitation, but they live in the hollows of trees and rocks. Many of the inhabitants of the Marquesas, Fiji, and other islands, are cannibals. Among a tribe in Sumatra, criminals condemned are eaten alive, each one, according to

his rank, taking that portion of flesh from the living victim he prefers, and devouring it on the spot either raw or cooked. Agriculture amongst these tribes is in a very backward state, and hunting is one of their principal means of subsistence.

Ancient chronicles state that King Edgar attempted to extirpate the wolves in England by commuting the punishments for certain offences into the acceptance of a certain number of wolves' tongues from each criminal ; and in Wales, by converting the tax of gold and silver into an annual tribute of three hundred wolves' heads. In subsequent times, their destruction was promoted by certain rewards, and some lands were held on condition of destroying the wolves which infested the parts of the kingdom in which they were situated. In 1281 these animals troubled several of the English counties, but after that period our records make no mention of them. The last wolf known in Scotland was killed in 1680 ; and in Ireland, one was killed in 1701. Very fearful accounts are on record of the ravages committed by wolves when in hard weather they associate in immense flocks. So lately as 1760, such terror is said to have been excited in France by ravages of wolves that public prayers were offered for their destruction. Since India became so much the country of Europeans, the race of tigers has been much thinned, and ere long it is probable that they will be driven to the most remote and impenetrable districts.

The wolf in these islands was hunted by an animal known under various appellations, as the Irish wolf-dog, the Irish greyhound, the Highland deerhound, and the Scotch greyhound. There appears to be no doubt that all the dogs thus denominated were essentially of the same breed. Its original home is supposed to have been Ireland, whence, during the proud days of ancient Rome, it was frequently conveyed in iron cages to assist in the sports of the city on the Tiber. Buffon observes : 'The Irish greyhounds are of a very ancient race, and still exist (though their number is small) in their original climate ; they were called by the ancients, dogs of Epirus and Albanian dogs.' Holinshed, in his *Description of Ireland and the Irish*, written in 1586, says : 'They are not without wolves and greyhounds to hunt them, bigger of bone and limb than a colt.' In Anglo-Saxon times, a nobleman never went out unaccompanied by some of these dogs and his hawk ; and so highly were they esteemed, that by the forest laws of Canute it was ordered that no person under the rank of a gentleman should keep one.

Until after the Norman Conquest, the chase was always, even in England, pursued on foot ; the nobles of the Conqueror's train introduced the custom of hunting on horseback. As cultivation increased, and the most formidable objects of chase, the wolves, decreased in England, the breed degenerated in size and strength ; whilst the quality now more desiderated, speed, was, on the other hand, still more strongly developed. The result is the present race of greyhounds. In Ireland, Scotland, and Wales, the rugged character of the country kept up for a much longer time the ancient deer-hunts in all their essential features. Boar-hunting, ages ago, was

practised in England. Fitzstephen, in his description of England, written in the reign of Henry II., in the latter part of the twelfth century, states that the forest by which London was then surrounded was frequented by boars as well as various other wild animals. In Scotland, a tract of country now forming one of the extremities of the county of Fife, was anciently called Muckross, which in Celtic signifies the Boar-promontory. The tradition is that it was a famous haunt of boars. A district forming a portion of the same country, designated by the name of the Boar Hills, lies in the vicinity of St Andrews, in the cathedral church of which city it is said that there were to be seen before the Reformation, attached by a chain to the high-altar, two boars' tusks of the extraordinary length of sixteen inches each, the memorials of an enormous specimen which had been slaughtered by the inhabitants after having long infested the neighbourhood. The wild-boar was undoubtedly an inhabitant of these islands, as mention is made of it in the laws of Hoel-Dda, a celebrated Welsh legislator, who permitted his grand-huntsman to chase that animal from the middle of November to the beginning of December. William the Conqueror punished with loss of life such as were guilty of killing the wild-boar.

Some remarkable occurrences have taken place with regard to the tame kinds. A gamekeeper actually educated a black sow to find game. Slut, the name he gave her, was rendered as staunch as any pointer. This pig-pointer was sold by auction for a very large sum of money. A gentleman had a sow which was taught to hunt, quarter the ground, and to back the other pointers. As a reward for her labours, the keeper carried bread in his pocket. In the island of Minorca, hogs are converted into beasts of draught; a cow, a sow, and two young horses have been seen yoked together, and of the four, the cow drew the least.

Nothing can more strongly establish the passionate devotion of the Normans to the sports of the field than the conduct of the Conqueror who laid waste the county of Hampshire and made it a forest for wild beasts. The nobles, like their leader, within their domains inclosed extensive districts to preserve the *ferae naturae*, to afford them the pleasures of the chase. Parks have been defined forests inclosed, and were called *haiae dominicales*. This word *haiae* appears in the composition of a variety of English local names under the dialectical difference of *hey*, *hay*, *haigh*. It is the Saxon *haeg*, and means a hedge. To our royal and baronial castles usually belonged two parks—one inclosed with a wall for fallow-deer, and the other for red-deer, fenced around with a hedge. Free warren was a franchise granted for preservation or custody of beasts and fowls of warren, which, being *ferae naturae*, every one had a right to kill as he could; but upon the introduction of the Forest Laws at the Norman Conquest, these animals being looked upon as royal game and the sole property of our savage monarchs, this franchise of free warren was invented to protect them, by giving the grantee a sole and exclusive power of killing such game as far as his warren extended, on condition of his preventing other

persons. Nanwood informs us that the hare, the cony, the pheasant, and the partridge were beasts and fowls of warren and no other. Sir Edward Coke mentions as beasts and fowls of warren, roes, rails, and quails, woodcocks, mallards, and herons. Free warren gave to the lord of a manor an exclusive right to hunt and kill the game therein.

An attempt was made some years ago to introduce the reindeer upon an extensive scale into the colder parts of England and Scotland. Those that were turned out upon the Pentland Hills, near Edinburgh—a situation which was considered peculiarly favourable—all died. A few appeared to do well in a park near Dublin, but then died. The Duke of Athole had previously placed a herd of reindeer in the mountains of his estate; but the experiment failed. Several fine species of the wapiti, an American deer, were turned into Windsor park some years ago: none of them lived more than a year. The migratory disposition of those animals is perhaps the reason of their not thriving in any inclosed country.

The timber of our woods in the reign of Queen Elizabeth was plentiful, nor did the navy, the pride of Britain, consume one-thousanth part of the timber which was found requisite. Though the country is now shorn of its stately oaks, other countries are ready to cut down their forests and exchange them for British industry. Ireland was formerly called the Island of Woods, and the trunks of large trees are still found in the bogs. A vast quantity of timber is exported from Germany. In some parts of Austria, peat is used as fuel, wood being scarce; yet the mountains of Transylvania and the neighbouring south countries abound in extensive forests. Such is the abundance of oak, that above two hundred thousand bushels of oak-apples are exported annually. The forests of Greece are considerable. The quantity of timber sent from Norway and Sweden is very great. The resources of Russia lie in its immense forests, its mines, and the fertility of its soil. Some of the gum-trees of Tasmania are three hundred and fifty feet high. The baobab of Africa is said to live five thousand years, and one trunk has measured one hundred and four feet in circumference. So thick and uninterrupted are the forests which cover the plains of South America between the Orinoco and the Amazon, that were it not for intervening rivers, the monkeys, almost the only inhabitants, might pass along the tops of the trees for several hundred miles without touching the earth. Sir Francis Head says that the backwoods of North America are being cleared in the following way. The mosquitoes torment the bisons and other wild animals to such an intolerable degree that they run with eagerness into any smoke they can reach, as their little tormentors will not follow them there. The Indians, then, instead of hunting for game, set fire to the forests; this brings the animals about them, and they are easily shot. This is favourable to the white agriculturist, but destructive to the poor Indian, at least as long as he continues a mere hunter.

In British North America, the felling and removing of timber for exportation is an important employment. This is known as the lumber-trade, and those engaged in it are called lumberers. In Danish America, the inhabitants

are supplied with wood for fuel by the drift-timber brought to the coasts by the currents. Brazil may be regarded as a vast forest—the forests are so extensive that they can hardly be penetrated even with the help of fire and the hatchet. In these vast solitudes, sometimes a death-like silence reigns; at other times are heard the howling of herds of monkeys, the screams of parrots and toucans, with the buzzing of the bee-like humming-bird, which the Brazilians prettily call the 'Kiss the Flower.' The New Holland lily grows to the height of twenty-four feet; and in the Argentine Republic there are immense numbers of thistles, ten or twelve feet high, which form an impenetrable barrier, whilst they last, to the attacks of the Indians.

The wild animals of England are now few in number. At Chillingworth Park, in Northumberland, there are some wild oxen. Had the fox not been preserved for the chase, it would long ago have been extinct. Dogs have a strong repugnance to the wolf, but delight in the chase of the fox. In cold countries, foxes are of various colours. Red foxes are so abundant in the wooded districts of the fur countries, that many thousand skins are annually exported from America to Britain. The fur of the black fox is highly valued. While the writer was engaged upon this article, the following circumstance came under his notice. On the Alveston Hill estate, near Stratford-on-Avon, a litter of eleven foxes, apparently about six weeks old, all tame and docile, have taken possession of a rabbit-hole in a bank at the foot of a clump of trees. The young cubs, notwithstanding the presence of numerous people attracted to the spot by the novel sight, leave their hole and drink occasionally out of a trough containing milk which had been placed there for their use. The animals are as tame as puppies, and the visitors easily induce them to come forth by whistling softly and calling them. They are content to be picked up and caressed, and they play about in the most amusing manner. An artist has been to the spot and photographed the whole group. It is thought that the dog-fox has been killed, and that the vixen has carried her cubs to the place mentioned. In corroboration of this, it may be stated that when first discovered, only four or five cubs were to be seen, and they have gradually increased until the present number has been reached.

The wild-cat finds its retreat among the mountains of Scotland and of the northern counties of England and of Wales and Ireland, the larger woods being its place of concealment. It has been called the 'British Tiger.' One was killed in Cumberland which measured five feet from the nose to the end of the tail. When Christopher Columbus discovered America, a hunter brought him one which he had found in the woods. The hedgehog has been said to be proof against poison. A German physician who wished to dissect one, gave it prussic acid; but it took no effect, neither did arsenic, opium, nor corrosive sublimate. It has been found to eat a hundred cantharides without injury. Plutarch mentions the case of a man who discovered that a hedgehog generally has its burrow open at various points, and warned by an instinct of atmospheric change, stopped up the opening next the quarter whence the wind would blow, and thus could

predict to a certainty to which quarter the wind would shift. Moles show changes of weather. The temperature or dryness of the air governs that underground worker in its motions as to the depth at which it lives or works; though this unquestionably is partly due, no doubt, to its want of food or inability to bear cold or thirst. The weasel has been known to become domesticated. The method adopted to obtain this end is to stroke them gently over the back, and to threaten or beat them when they attempt to bite. It has been found that when their teeth have been rubbed with garlic, all inclination to bite has been removed. Their bite is generally fatal: a hare or rabbit once severely bitten never recovers. Buffon gives the case of a weasel being found with three young ones in the carcase of a wolf that was grown putrid, and that had been hung up by the hind-legs as a terror to others. In this strange and horrid retreat, the weasel had retired to bring forth her young; she had furnished the cavity with hay, grass, and leaves; and the young ones were just brought forth when they were discovered by a peasant passing that way.

The stoat of the continent is a very precious article of commerce. In Britain, their skin is of little value. In July 1827, a gentleman of Cathcart, near Glasgow, having shot and wounded a stoat, observed that it escaped into the hole of an old stone wall. He was led to make an examination of the place, when he found a couple of leverets immolated. The place also contained two young partridges entire, and a pheasant's egg unbroken. Besides these were two other leverets in a state of putrefaction; and at the extremity of the retreat lay the dead stoat. Naturalists state that stoats seldom eat their plunder until putrefaction sets in; and this fact would seem to bear out the impression. The polecat is very destructive to game. During a severe storm, one of these animals was traced in the snow from the side of a rivulet to a hole at some distance from it. As it was observed to have made frequent trips, and as other marks were to be seen in the snow which could not easily be accounted for, it was thought a matter worthy of greater attention. Its hole was accordingly examined, the polecat taken; and eleven eels were discovered to be the fruit of its nocturnal excursions. The marks in the snow were found to have been made by the motion of the eels in the creature's mouth.

It is a curious circumstance that many of those oaks which are called spontaneous are planted by the squirrel. This little animal has performed an essential service to the British navy. A gentleman walking one day in the woods belonging to the Duke of Beaufort, in the county of Monmouth, his attention was diverted by a squirrel, which sat very compositely upon the ground. He stopped to perceive its motions. In a few minutes the animal darted to the top of a tree beneath which he had been sitting; in an instant it was down with an acorn in its mouth, and after digging a small hole, it deposited the acorn; then covering it, it darted up the tree again. In a moment it was down again with another, which it buried in the same manner. This it continued to do as long as the gentleman watched it. The industry of this animal is

directed to the purpose of securing itself against want in the winter; and it is probable that its memory is not sufficiently retentive to enable it to remember the spot in which it deposited every acorn; the industrious little fellow no doubt loses a few every year. These few spring up, and are destined to supply the place of the parent tree.

Asses, like horses, are found in a wild state, but in greater abundance. This animal is found wild in many islands of the Archipelago, and in the deserts of Libya and Numidia. They live in herds, each having a chief, and are extremely timid. The ass, so common now in England, was entirely lost in the reign of Queen Elizabeth. Holinshed says that our land yielded no asses. In early times the ass was held in high repute, for he was ridden both by the poor and the rich, and is frequently mentioned in the Scriptures. In the principal streets of Cairo, asses stand bridled and saddled for hire, and answer the same purpose as cabs in London. In Egypt and Arabia, asses are frequently seen of great size and elegance. Their step is light and sure, and their pace brisk and easy. They are not only in common use for riding in Egypt, but the Mohammedan merchants and ladies of the highest rank use them. In England, the ass is regarded as a stupid and contemptible animal. The Spaniards, on the contrary, bestow much pains upon him in endeavouring to improve the breed.

#### A FRIEND OF THE FAMILY.

##### CHAPTER II.—WORSE AND WORSE.

THE Major fervently wished that the ground would open and swallow him. Here was a third lady to pacify and to convince that a mistake had been made. He could see that she was in a more exasperated state even than Mrs Joseph, and likely to be as blind as Mrs John. The complication was becoming utterly bewildering, and he felt that his brain would not endure much more of it. How could such simple letters as his—made studiously cautious in their statements—evoke such wildly erroneous interpretations? He would rather have faced a whole battalion of mutinous Sikhs or infuriated Afghans than have had to go through the inevitable interview with this beautiful girl.

As soon as she reached the Major's side, she clutched his arm as if it were that of her natural protector, and turned sharply upon Maynard: 'Now, sir, will you leave me alone? Major Dawkins will conduct me to my aunt, and will, if necessary, protect me from your importunities.'

'But Nelly, I only want to know what is my fault? How have I given you cause for treating me in this way?' pleaded Maynard. 'I am positive that none can exist except in your own imagination. I am sure the Major will tell you that it is not fair to condemn a man without hearing his defence—without even telling him what he is accused of.'

'If you are a gentleman, you will defer further discussion of the subject until you see my aunt, Mrs Joseph Elliott.'

Had they been alone, the lover would doubtless

have acted differently; but to have such words addressed to him in the presence of another man left no alternative. He bowed and retired, hurt and angered by this injustice of his betrothed. Whatever her reason for this outburst might be, he was resolved that it should be promptly explained. He was a straightforward young fellow, and not one to rest for a moment in doubt as to the meaning of her conduct.

The brief scene had closed before the Major could find his voice. 'Call him back,' he said agitatedly—'call him back before it is too late.'

'I certainly will not,' replied the lady with a movement of the head as if about to look behind, suggesting that she half-hoped to see him still following. But he was not.

'Then I must. I cannot allow you to distress yourself and a fine fellow like that in consequence of my blunder.'

She stopped and faced him with an expression of supercilious wonder. By this little movement she could look without appearing to turn for the purpose of looking whether or not Maynard had really obeyed her. 'I do not understand you, Major Dawkins,' she said with a faint note of chagrin in her musical voice—for Maynard really was not in sight.

'Of course you cannot. How could you? The letter you have got was not meant for you. I wrote it to another lady, and I beg you to give it back to me, so that no further mischief may come of it.'

'Another lady! Then I am not the *only* one he thinks of?' (She was quoting from the letter.)—'Oh, Major Dawkins, this is too much. Please, let me go to the house, and do not say another word about it until I have had time to recover and to think.'

The Major stood aghast; he had put his foot in it again. 'But you are taking me up in quite a wrong way. Certainly you are the only one Maynard thinks of; but he is not the man referred to in the letter. Do give it back to me; and when you are calmer, everything will be explained.'

He pleaded very earnestly; but his object was defeated by the ingenuity on which he had congratulated himself. He had mentioned no names in any of the epistles. The mind of each lady on reading the one she received naturally fastened upon the man in whom she was most interested, and the Major's excited attempts at explanation failed to make the error clear to them. Their unreasonableness was painful to him; and if he had been less anxious about remedying his error, he would have laughed at it.

'For whom, then, was the letter written?' asked Nellie, her indignation now turning against the Major, as she reflected how cruel and how foolish Stanley Maynard would think her if she had accused him of falsehood on no other ground than that she had received a misdirected letter from a friend. 'I must insist upon an answer.'

'You really must not insist upon my telling you. I accept all the blame; and it would be another wicked blunder on my part to give you my friend's name.'

'In that case, I must decline to return the letter until we are in the presence of my aunt and Mr Maynard.—Meanwhile, I need not trouble you to escort me to the house.' Nellie walked

proudly away; but the poor girl was ready to cry with vexation and with regret for the hastiness of temper which had characterised her conduct towards Stanley Maynard. In the moment of repentance, however, came the remembrance of the words which had distracted her. 'I want to save you' (wrote the Major) 'from a grave misunderstanding.' ('Very kind indeed,' she interjected.) 'He who is, I know, dearest to you, thinks *only* of you. Consider his impulsive nature, and pardon his temporary aberration.' ('What could that mean, if not that he had been making love to somebody else?' she asked bitterly. Had she not herself seen how bare-facedly he flirted with Mrs John, until she had a tiff with him on the subject? If he could dare so much before her eyes, what might he not do when unchecked by her presence?) 'Be merciful to him,' the note proceeded, 'as hitherto, and you will have your reward. I mean to take the first available opportunity of talking to him after my arrival at Todhurst, and am confident that he will be promptly brought to reason.'

Was not that enough to rouse the spirit of any girl who had proper pride, which means self-respect? Nellie thought in her anger that it was more than enough. No doubt the Major had talked to him, and having brought him to reason, was now anxious to screen him by telling her that it was all a mistake—that the letter had been intended for somebody else! But she was frightened by this conclusion. Surely the Major could not tell a deliberate falsehood! He might not have meant to do so, and yet do it in the excitement of the moment, in order to soothe her. That must be the way of it; and what an indignity that it should be necessary for a friend to plead for her with the man to whom she had promised her hand!

Her thoughts alternated between the hope that it was all a mistake and the fear that it was not. So she went to her room, cried, had a headache, and excused herself from joining the family at luncheon.

The Major was out of breath and out of patience as he gazed helplessly after the retreating form of Nellie Carroll. Nobody would listen to him; everybody seemed determined to believe that he had entered into a diabolical conspiracy to wreck the happiness of the house of Elliott. What on earth could there be in any of his letters to cause such a commotion, even when they had got into the wrong hands? He had assured every one that there was only a misunderstanding, and he had promised all round to set it right. But they would not give him a chance. He had a good mind to order Hollis to pack up for the next train to London. That, however, would be cowardly, and he was not a coward. He would see the thing out to the bitter end. He lifted his head with an air of resolution, and the bitter end he saw at that moment was represented by the wealthy spinster, Miss Euphemia Panton. She was standing at a little distance, glaring at him severely through her gold-rimmed *pince-nez*. The Major had reason to believe that he had found favour in her eyes, and he thought with intense relief: 'Well, here is somebody at last who will give me a word of sympathy, and talk sensibly with me.'

She, too, had reason to believe that she had found favour in the Major's eyes, and was pleased accordingly. But on the present occasion, as he tripped hopefully towards her (he tripped somewhat less gracefully than usual, on account of his recent excessive exercise), she made no responsive movement; the *pince-nez* was not lowered, and the severe expression remained. She had been observing him pleading with all the ardour of a lover to Miss Carroll; and she had no doubt whatever of the meaning of his evidently eager speech: he was in love with the minx, and he had been only pretending to care for Miss Euphemia! No lady can submit to be trifled with in matters of affection, and least of all ladies who have arrived at what may be called the 'undiscovered decade' in feminine history. She had passed into that realm of mystery, and was indeed one of its oldest inhabitants; and when nature would have lifted her out of it into the peaceful land of resigned old-maidenism, she sought the aid of art in order to keep her place in the still hopeful region. She availed herself of the modern elixirs of youth, and flattered herself that she did so with complete success. She, at their first meeting, noted that the Major trafficked with the same beneficent powers. He on his side made a similar observation regarding her. Strange to say, this fact constituted a bond of sympathy between them; but Miss Euphemia believed that the Major was unaware of her secret, and he was satisfied that she had no suspicion of his; whilst each pitied the other for not being more expert in the use of dyes and cosmetics. Thus they became special friends, and found so much pleasure in each other's society, that a matrimonial climax seemed not improbable, the lady having a sufficient dowry to dispose satisfactorily of the important problem of ways and means.

'Thank goodness, you are here, Miss Panton,' exclaimed the Major in the full confidence of her sympathy in his miserable position. 'I have got myself into a most abominable mess by an act of stupidity which, although reprehensible, is excusable.'

The lady answered not a word. She was nearly a head taller than he, and she continued to survey him through her glasses as if he had been some zoological specimen.

He had been hot enough before; he was chilled to the marrow now. He could scarcely believe his senses. Would she, too, desert him in this crisis?

'Miss Panton,' he stammered, 'I hoped—that is, I believed that you would show me some consideration. I suppose Mrs Joseph has been speaking to you; but if you will only listen to a few words of explanation, you will understand me.'

'I think, Major Dawkins, I have to-day observed enough on the tennis-lawn and here, to enable me to understand you perfectly without Mrs Joseph Elliott's assistance or yours.' The words were icicles. She dropped her *pince-nez* and walked away.

The Major was speechless. He trembled or shivered with dismay. Lifting a hand to his brow, he felt the beads of cold perspiration on it, and at the same moment the gong sounded for luncheon. Good heavens! Horrible idea!

—the effect of all this excitement and perspiration must be to change the colour of his hair! And true enough it was beginning to show a marked shade of gray-green at the roots. He must get to his room to repair the damage before he appeared at the luncheon table. 'Desperate ills need desperate remedies.'

Luncheon at Todhurst was, except in the hunting season, like the family gathering of other days, when the mid-day meal was the chief one. There were blithe interchanges of the morning's experiences, pleasant intercourse with some of the elder members of the nursery, and a homely ease which was not always found at the late dinner, when formal company-manners had to be assumed, so far as they could be in the genial presence of Squire Elliott. All this was changed on the fatal day on which the Major's misdirected letters had been delivered. The Squire sat at one end of the table, evidently in an ill-humour; his spouse, Mrs Joseph, at the other end, doing her best not to show the wrath which was in her bosom. Mrs John was suppressing her natural gaiety and desire to make fun of the whole party, whilst she was pathetically earnest in her endeavours to soothe the perturbed spirit of her lord. The latter was irritable and gloomy, accepting her attentions most ungraciously. Stanley Maynard ate and looked as if he were savagely devouring an enemy. Miss Euphemia sat like a post, playing with her knife and fork rather than eating. Nellie was not present.

The Major was late in taking his place, and was flustered in consequence, even more than he might have been under the circumstances. He felt the gloom which pervaded the place, and he was made painfully conscious of the fact that he was the cause of it. He was generally regarded as an acquisition to any party, for he had a special knack of setting conversations 'going,' a more useful quality than that which constitutes a 'good talker.' The latter demands everybody's attention, and bores the greater part of his audience; the former enables everybody to speak, and thus produces the agreeable feeling of self-satisfaction in having personally contributed to the enjoyment of the hour.

With desperate heroism, he endeavoured to break the spell which tied the tongues of his companions. He told one of his best stories, the point of which had never failed to set the table in a roar of laughter. Lugubrious grimaces were the only response. He tried another anecdote, with the same result. He descended to the lowest depths of convivial intercourse; he propounded a conundrum, and the eldest of the girls immediately answered it with the addition of the galling commentary: 'I knew that long ago.' In his present condition of absolute helplessness, he wished to goodness the child would remember another conundrum, and give it for his benefit, if not for that of the company. Probably, she would have done so, had not the mother's eye been upon her, suggesting the austere maxim, 'Children should be seen, not heard.'

The Major took another tack. He put questions to his host about the moors, about the horses, about the hounds, and about the cause of *Tally-ho's* illness—any one of which topics would at another time have started the Squire

into a gallop of chat. He would have compared the seasons as affecting the moors for twenty years past; he would have detailed the pedigree and merits of every horse in his stables; he would have repeated endless anecdotes about the hounds; and as to the illness of *Tally-ho*, he would have gone into the most minute particulars as to its cause, his treatment, and the probable result.

But on this day all was in vain. The Major's suggestive queries were responded to by: 'Don't know,' 'Much the same as usual,' 'Hope for the best,' and, 'I daresay the brute will come round.'

When they rose from the table, the Major thanked heaven that this trial was over. The Squire, with a curious mingling of awkwardness and suppressed ill-temper, utterly opposed to his habitually jovial manner, advanced to his unhappy guest: 'I want to see you in the library in about half an hour,' he said, and walked out of the room.

'That's a comfort,' thought the Major. 'I shall have a man with some common-sense to hear me.'

Meanwhile, he would have liked to speak a few words of consolation to Maynard; but that gentleman met his advances with somewhat repellent politeness.

'If you want to speak to me about the trouble you have made between Miss Carroll and me, you will have ample opportunity to do so when we meet in the library,' he said, and strolled out to the lawn to seek the soothing influence of a cigar.

Then the Major wished to discharge the duty he had so rashly undertaken, which was to bring the morbidly suspicious John Elliott to reason. He was only now realising the difficulty of the task; and he presently had a decisive indication that it was likely to be one he could not accomplish. He had barely uttered half-a-dozen words of his well-intentioned admonition which was to precede his explanation of 'the incident,' when John Elliott peevishly interrupted him: 'I have promised not to discuss this subject until we are in the library.'

So, he was to meet the three of them. So much the better; they were men, and they would give him a patient hearing. Still, he would have liked a little private talk with John Elliott before the meeting in the library, which was assuming the character of a sort of court-martial. There were things to say to him which could only be uttered when they were conversing confidentially. For instance, he could not say to him before others: 'You have been accusing Mrs John of behaviour unbecoming your wife; you have magnified the circumstance of her allowing young Maynard to kiss her under the mistletoe last Christmas, until you have come to believe that every time she says a friendly word to him or smiles on him, she is false to you. You have even gone so far as to think of employing a private detective to watch them. Now, my dear friend, do get all that confounded nonsense out of your head. Remember that she has known Maynard from his boyhood; and although she is not old enough to be his mother, she still looks on him as a boy, and he regards her as an elder sister. She is naturally frank, and naturally treats him with more frankness

than she does other men. You know that she long ago set her heart upon making a match between him and Nellie Carroll, both being suitable in every respect; and she has succeeded. What do you think will happen if your absurd fancies get wind? Why, there will be a general rupture—a split in the camp which may separate the young folk, and, possibly, you and Mrs John, who has been and is devoted to you.'

There, that would have brought him to reason, if he had a scrap of sense left. But it could not be spoken in the presence of others. Very likely, suspicious John would ask him how he came to know all this, and the question would be troublesome—a thousand times more troublesome since all the letters had got into the wrong hands. The one for John Elliott had reached Mrs Joseph, instead of the simple intimation of the date of the Major's arrival; that for Nellie had been delivered to Mrs John, and Mrs John's to Nellie. It was awkward.

'As to the question,' the Major reflected: 'I got the information from Matt Willis, the brother of Mrs John; and he made me promise not to mix him up in the affair. He got the information from John Elliott himself, who complained to his brother-in-law about the way his wife was carrying on with Maynard. Matt had an unconquerable antipathy to family squabbles, and would not interfere; but thinking that something should be done to shut John up before serious harm came of his insane suspicions, he asked me, as the friend of the family, to put things right. Like a fool, I consented; and the blame of all the trouble falls on me! Am I to blame?—Stop a minute. By Jove!—it is John Elliott who is the author of the whole mischief, and I'll tell him so.'

Greatly consoled by the discovery that he was not the original culprit in causing what promised to be a serious breach in the relationships of valued friends, the Major was prepared to face the court-martial before which he was presently to stand. Ay, and he would have no nonsense about the affair. He would tell Squire Joseph bluntly that Mrs Joseph had taken possession of a letter which did not belong to her. He would tell Maynard to go and speak to Nellie, and assure her, as he had done, that she had misinterpreted the letter she had received, even if it had been intended for her; and he would tell John Elliott that he must either speak to him in private, or take the consequence of his speaking in the presence of the Squire and Stanley Maynard.

#### AN OLD TULIP GARDEN.

A QUIET, sunny nook in the hollow it is, this square old garden, with its gravelled walks and high stone walls; a sheltered retreat left peaceful here, under the overhanging woods, when the stream of the world's traffic turned off into another channel. The gray stone house, separated from the garden by a thick privet hedge and moss-grown court, is the last dwelling at this end of the quiet market-town, and, with its slate roof and substantial double story, is of a class greatly superior to its neighbours, whose warm red tiles are just visible over the walls. It stands where the old road to Edinburgh dipped to cross a little

stream, and, in the bygone driving days, the stage-coach, after rattling out of the town and down the steep road there, between the white, tile-roofed houses, when it crossed the bridge opposite the door, began to ascend through deep, embowering woods. But more direct highway to the Scottish metropolis was opened many a year ago: just beyond the bridge, a wall was built across the road; and the gray house with its garden was left secluded in the sunny hollow. The rapid crescendo of the coach-guard's horn no longer wakens the echoes of the place, and the striking of the clock every hour in the town steeple is the only sound that reaches the spot from the outside world.

The hot sun beats on the garden here all day, from the hour in the morning when it gets above the grand old beeches of the wood, till it sets, away beyond the steeple of the town. But in the hottest hours it is always refreshing to look, over the weather-stained tiles of the long low toolhouse, at the mossy green of the hill that rises there, cool and shaded, under the trees. Now and then a bull, of the herd that feeds in the glades of the wood, comes down that shaded bank, whisking his tawny sides with an angry tail to keep off the pestering flies, and his deep bellow reverberates in the hollow. In the early morning, too, before the dewy freshness has left the air, the sweet mellow pipe of the mavis and the fuller notes of the blackbird float across from these green depths, and ever and again throughout the day the clear whistle of some chaffinch comes from behind the leaves.

Standing here, among the deep box edgings and gravel paths, it is not difficult to recall the place's glory of twenty years ago—the glory upon which these ancient plum-trees, blossoming yet against the sunny walls, looked down. To the eye of Thought, time and space obstruct no clouds, and in the atmosphere of Memory, the gardens of the Past bloom for us always. Years and years agone! It is the day of the fashion for Dutch bulbs, when fabulous prices were paid for an unusually 'fancy' bulb, and in this garden some of the finest of them are grown. The tulips are in flower, and the long narrow beds which, with scant space between, fill the entire middle of the garden, are ablaze with the glory of their bloom. Queenly flowers they are, and tall, each one with a gentle pedigree—for nothing common or unknown has entrance here—and crimson, white, and yellow, the velvet petals of some almost black, striped with rare and exquisite markings, they raise to the sun their large chaste chalices. The perfection of shape is there, as they rise from the midst of their green, lance-like leaves; no amorous breeze ever invades the spot to dishevel their array or filch their treasures; and the precious golden dust lies in the deep heart of each, untouched as yet save by the sunshine and the bee. When the noonday heat becomes too strong, awnings will be spread above the beds; for with the fierce glare, the petals would open out and the pollen fall before the delicate task of crossing had been done.

But see! Through the gate in the privet hedge there enters as fair a sight. Ladies in creamy flowered muslins and soft Indian silks, shading their eyes from the sun with tiny parasols, pink and white and green—grand dames of

the county, and grander from a distance ; gentlemen in blue swallow-tailed coats and white pantaloons—gallants escorting their ladies, and connoisseurs to examine the flowers—all, conducted by the owner, book in hand, advance into the garden and move along the beds. For that owner, an old man with white hair, clear gray eyes, and the memory of their youthful red remaining in his cheeks, this is the gala time of the year. Next month, the beds of ranunculus will bloom, and pinks and carnations will follow ; but the tulips are his most famous flowers, and, for the few days while they are in perfection, he leads about, with his old-world courtesy, replying to a question here, giving a name or a pedigree there, a constant succession of visitors. These are his hours of triumph. For eleven months he has gone about his beloved pursuit, mixing loams and leaf-moulds and earths, sorting, drying, and planting the bulbs, and tending their growth with his own hand—for to whose, else, could he trust the work?—and now his toil has blossomed, and its worth is acknowledged. Plants envied by peers, plants not to be bought, are there, and he looks into the heart of each tenderly, for he knows it a child of his own.

Presently he leads his visitors back into the house, across the mossy stones of the court, where, under glass frames, thousands of auricula have just passed their bloom, and up the outside stair to the sunny door in the house-side. He leads them into the shady dining-room, with its furniture of dark old bees-waxed mahogany, where there is a slight refreshment of wine and cake, rare old Madeira, and cake, rich with eggs and Indian spice, made by his daughter's own hand. Jars and glasses are filled with sweet-smelling flowers, and the breath of the new-blown summer comes in through the open doors.

The warm sunlight through the brown linen blind finds its way across the room, and falls with subdued radiance on the middle picture of the opposite wall. The dark eyes, bright cheeks, and cherry mouth were those of the old man's wife—the wife of his youth. She died while the smile was yet on her lip and the tear of sympathy in her eye ; for she was the friend of all, and remains yet a tender memory among the neighbouring poor. The old man is never seen to look upon that picture ; but on Sundays for hours he sits in reverie by his open Bible here in the room alone. In a velvet case in the corner press there, lies a silver medal. It was pinned to his breast by the Third George on a great day at Windsor long ago. For the old man peacefully ending his years here among the flowers, in his youth served the king, and fought, as a naval officer, through the French and Spanish wars. As he goes quietly about, alone, among his garden beds, perchance he hears again sometimes the hoarse word of command, the quick tread of the men, and the deep roar of the heavy guns, as his ship goes into action. The smoke of these battles rolled leeward long ago, and their glory and their wounds are alike forgotten. In that press, too, lies the wonderful ebony flute, with its marvellous confusion of silver keys, upon which he used to take pleasure in recalling the stirring airs of the fleet. It has played its last tune ; the keys are untouched now, and it is

laid past, warped by age, to be fingered by its old master no more.

But his guests rise to leave, and, receiving with antique grace their courtly acknowledgments, he attends the ladies across the stone-paved hall to their carriages.

Many years ago ! The old man since then has himself been carried across that hall to his long home, and no more do grand dames visit the high-walled garden. But the trees whisper yet above it ; the warmth of summer beats on the gravelled walks ; and the flowers, lovely as of old in their immortal youth, still open their stainless petals to the sun.

#### ABOUT COBRAS.

BY AN OFFICER.

WHILE at home on furlough from India a short time ago, I was much amused at finding a very general impression among my friends that to come across a cobra is an every-day kind of occurrence in India. How erroneous this idea is may be gathered from the fact that not many days ago a brother-officer told me that although he had been about ten years in India, he had never yet seen a cobra in a wild state. His is, it is true, probably an exceptional case ; but still it shows that an Englishman may pass a considerable time in India without coming across one of these venomous reptiles. Cobras, however, are met with quite often enough, and sometimes in very curious and uncomfortable places. For instance, a young lady who had just returned from a ball in a small station in Southern India, noticed, as she was on the point of getting into bed, that the pillow looked disarranged ; and on taking it up to smooth it out, she discovered a cobra coiled up underneath it. She called out for assistance ; and her father coming to the rescue, speedily despatched the obnoxious intruder with a stick. I happened to mention this circumstance to an officer one day, and he informed me that the very same thing had happened to himself soon after his first arrival in the country, and that, in consequence, he never got into bed until he had examined the pillows.

In the year 1873, while quartered at Bellary, on going into the drawing-room of the bungalow, which at that time I shared with a friend, I discovered a cobra curled up on the sofa cushion. I hastened out of the room to fetch a stick ; but in doing so, I must, I suppose, have made some noise, as on returning the snake had disappeared. A few evenings later, however, just as my 'chum' was leaving the house to go out to dinner, he called out to me that there was a snake crawling up the steps of the veranda in front of the drawing-room. I ran out with a stick, and succeeded in killing the unwelcome visitor. It turned out to be a fairly large cobra, and was in all probability the one which I had seen a few days previously on the sofa. It is, however, in the bathrooms of an Indian bungalow that cobras, when met with within doors, are most frequently encountered, as they come there in pursuit of the frogs which delight to take up their quarters there ; for froggy is an article of diet to which the cobra is very partial. An officer of the Madras cavalry, since deceased,

told me that when quartered at Arcot, he one day observed in his bathroom, emerging from the waste-water pipe, the head of a cobra, which was holding in his mouth a frog. The pipe was too narrow to admit of the snake's withdrawing his head unless he released his victim; this, however, from unwillingness to forego his meal, he would not do, and in consequence, paid the penalty for his gluttony with his life.

One day, my wife's ayah came running into our bedroom saying there was a large snake in the bathroom. Arming myself as usual with a stick, I went into the bathroom just in time to see the snake disappear into the waste-water pipe, which ran under another small room to the back of the house, where the water found its outlet. The servants stationed themselves at the outlet, while I endeavoured to drive the reptile out from the rear, first with my stick, and afterwards by pouring the contents of a kettle of boiling water down the pipe. Both attempts to dislodge the intruder from his position proving ineffectual, I commenced a vigorous assault on him by thrusting a bamboo about five feet long down the pipe, and this time success rewarded my efforts, and the snake, driven from his refuge, was killed by the servants outside. This cobra measured about five feet six inches in length, and was the largest that I have ever seen killed. I may here mention that the ordinary ideas about the size attained by this species of snake are greatly exaggerated. Some years ago, a surgeon-major serving in the Madras presidency, with whom I was acquainted, took a great interest in this matter, and offered a considerable reward to any one who would bring him a cobra six feet in length; but, if my memory serves me right, the reward was never gained, although a very large number of cobras were produced for his inspection.

Once I witnessed a wonderful escape from the almost invariably fatal effects of a cobra bite. I was marching with some native troops in the cold weather, and halted for the night at a place called Maikur, where, instead of having our tents pitched, my wife and I preferred occupying a small bungalow belonging to the department of Public Works, which was situated opposite the encamping-ground. Sitting outside the bungalow after dinner, I had occasion to call my head-servant to give him some orders for the next morning. As he ran up, I saw him kick something off his left foot, and at the same time he called out: 'Samp, sahib, samp!' ('A snake, sir, a snake.') There was a bright wood-fire burning close by, and I saw by its light the snake with its hood up. It was immediately killed by some of the camp-followers, and was brought to me, and proved to be a small cobra. On examining my servant's foot, I found one tiny puncture on the ankle, on which was a single drop of blood. The man was at once taken to the hospital tent, and attended to by the hospital assistant in medical charge of the troops, who applied ammonia and did all that was in his power. I was very anxious about the man; but he awoke me at the hour for marching next morning as if nothing had happened, and for some time apparently experienced no inconvenience. Some weeks later, however, after we had reached our destination, his left leg swelled

very much, and he suffered great pain for a considerable time; but he eventually recovered. The snake was seen by eight or ten persons besides myself, and was beyond doubt a cobra; and the only possible explanation of the man's escape seems to be that the reptile must have bitten something else very shortly before, and so to a great extent exhausted the deadly poison in its fangs.

One of our children had a narrow escape, though of a different kind, when quite a baby. My wife picked him up one day from the floor, where he was lying enjoying himself in baby fashion. She had hardly done so, when a cobra fell from the roof on the very spot on which the little one had been disporting himself the moment before.

On one occasion, a curious native superstition with regard to the subject of these notes came to my notice. A cobra which had been killed in the hut of one of the men was brought up to be shown to me, when a havildar (native sergeant) called my attention to the fact that the end of his tail was blunt, saying in Hindustani: 'Look, sahib; this is a downright villain; he has bitten some man, and so lost the tip of his tail.' On my making further inquiries, I was confidently assured that whenever a cobra bites a man, the tip of his tail invariably becomes blunted!

#### MITIS METAL

THE introduction of wrought-iron castings by the 'Mitis process,' to which attention has lately been directed, forms a new and an important departure in the employment of this class of iron. Up to the present time, wrought-iron has been worked into the requisite forms by means of hammering; whilst a system of stamping in moulds was deemed a considerable advance in economical working. It is now, however, proposed to treat wrought-iron in the same manner as cast-iron—namely, by melting and pouring it into moulds made in sand, and corresponding in shape with the object desired. By such process a considerable saving in the cost of production is obtained. Annealing is found to be unnecessary.

The difficulty which has hitherto barred the adoption of this method has been the high temperature to which it has been necessary to heat the iron before it became sufficiently fluid to flow into the moulds. Wrought-iron fuses at about four thousand degrees Fahrenheit, but a considerably higher temperature had to be obtained before the metal passed out of the viscid state; and on reaching this increased heat, it was found to absorb gases which caused cavities and flaws in the castings, rendering them worthless, and what are technically known in the foundry as 'wasters.' To obviate this difficulty, Peter Ostberg, a Swedish engineer, has taken advantage of the fact that the melting-point in alloys is considerably below that of their components; and by combining with the iron a small percentage of aluminium, he has succeeded in lowering the temperature of fusion of the mixture to such an extent that excellent

castings can be obtained, the temperature reached not being high enough to cause the absorption of gases. The castings are clean and sharp in form, and remarkably strong and fine in texture, being in some cases, it is said, half as tough again as the metal from which they were made. The great reduction in price cannot fail to procure for the new process an opening commensurate with its intrinsic merits.

In the United States and Sweden, Mitis Metal has already established itself as an article of commerce at once reliable and economical; and there can be little doubt that the engineers of this country will avail themselves of this new form of iron, placed at their disposal by an invention which promises to rival in importance any introduced into this branch of industry for many years past.

#### MISSION TO DEEP-SEA FISHERMEN.

In the year 1844, the Thames Church Mission was instituted. A few years ago, an accidental development of the organisation led to the establishment of a missionary enterprise among the fishermen engaged in the North Sea. But the possibilities of the new field of labour soon justified the formation of a separate body to cope with them; and on the 30th of November 1884, the Mission to Deep-sea Fishermen was started. Its primary object is to give religious teaching to the twelve thousand men and lads who labour on the twelve fishing-fleets cruising in the North Sea. It has six smacks in its service, a seventh being, at the time of writing, on the stocks. These smacks supplement their philanthropic labours by fishing with the fleets with which they sail. Each vessel carries a missionary skipper, who, as often as the weather will permit, gathers together in his spacious hold a congregation of fellow-fishermen for worship. The earnestness of a devout mariner has often been noted; and from a short cruise the writer recently took on one of the Mission vessels, he can testify not only to the exceptional enthusiasm and fervour which characterised the services held on board, but also to the sound moral tone which, as a result of such services, prevails generally in the fleets—a condition of things in happy contrast to the riots and crimes which were rife there in former years.

But not only are the Mission vessels centres of religious instruction; each carries a quantity of healthy literature, which, circulating through the fleets, beguiles many a fisherman's leisure hour of its tedium. Then, too, medicine-chests and surgical appliances are always kept on board; and with these at hand, the skipper and mate, qualified by their certificates from the St John's Ambulance Association and the National Health Society, treat the sick and injured fishermen of the fleet, who would otherwise suffer until reaching land the pangs of untreated disorders and undressed wounds. Besides this, each missionary skipper labours to promulgate temperance principles among the fleets both by personal example and gentle persuasion. Another feature of the Mission's work is the collecting and forwarding of knitted cuffs and comforters—made by friends on shore—to the North Sea fishermen, as preventives against the terrible 'sea-blisters' which oil-skins produce on unprotected wrists and

necks. Lastly, we should mention that the fishermen of the fleets are encouraged to come frequently aboard the Mission vessels to join in social gossip over a mug of cocoa. Thus each of these vessels exists in the various capacities of church, library, temperance hall, dispensary, and social lounge. The methods by which the Mission has fought the 'coper' or 'floating grog-shop' are tolerably well known, and so need not be dwelt upon here.

Glancing at statistics, we note that, during last year, there were 1856 visits paid to vessels; 10,375 attendants at the seven hundred services held; 515 temperance pledges were taken; 74,127 tracts and 45,258 magazines distributed; 2725 cases medically and surgically treated; 6665 comforters, 16,210 pairs of cuffs, and 668 helmets, given away; and 626 copies of the Scriptures sold. Thus the Mission shows a most healthy growth. It has recently been established in new offices at 181 Queen Victoria Street, London, E.C.; and a new phase of its enterprise is the circulation of a twopenny monthly journal entitled *Toilers of the Deep*, being a 'record of Mission-work among them.' The magazine is an excellent one, and we commend it to all who feel an interest in the twelve thousand men and boys 'who toil through furious blast and sleet-storm—who hazard their lives, and fall victims, hundreds of them, to the pitiless waves, that markets at home may be well supplied.'

#### LOST AT SEA.

Good-NIGHT, beloved; the light is slowly dying  
From wood and field; and far away the sea  
Moans deep within its bosom. Is it sighing  
For those whose rest can never be broken be;  
For those who found their way to God; yet never  
Beneath green sod may rest, the sea holds them for  
ever?

Yes, deep and still your grave; the ocean keeping  
Whate'er it gains for ever in its hold.  
I know that in its depths you now are sleeping,  
Quiet and dreamless as in churchyard mould;  
But I have no still mound, as others, only  
The memory of times past, 'mid days that now are  
lonely.

Buried deep with you in the sea for ever  
Is all the brightness earth had once for me.  
The spring returns; flowers bloom again; but never  
I feel the joy in bird, and flower, and tree;  
I see, but feel not as in days of yore,  
Those days that can come back to me, ah, nevermore!

But yet I know that I am not forsaken.  
'Lead Thou me on,' I now can calmly say.  
None know the bitterness of sorrow taken  
From out my heart; when I that prayer could pray,  
In His own time God took you in His keeping,  
All earthly sorrows past; where there is no more  
weeping.

FLORENCE PEACOCK.

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